



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Mississippi Valley Division

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News Release

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Corps' Mississippi River Commission recommends environmental restoration at Reelfoot Lake

Vicksburg, Miss., December 10, 1999 -- The Mississippi River Commission met at the Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers headquarters December 6 to consider a proposal for ecosystem restoration in the vicinity of Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee and Kentucky.

The work is authorized by Congress under the Mississippi River and Tributaries project and is designed to restore and protect the environment by addressing the loss of aquatic habitat, declining water quality, and the loss of waterfowl habitat resulting from sedimentation accumulation in the lake. The Corps will also replace the deteriorated spillway, built in 1931 by the State of Tennessee, restoring the capability to control water levels in the lake.

Following briefings and recommendations from the Memphis District Engineer, the Commission approved the final feasibility report on Reelfoot Lake.

The Reelfoot Lake area contains approximately 31,256 acres of publicly owned land and water. These areas are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Tennessee Departments of Environment and Conservation and the Tennessee Wildlife Management Area.

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The plan provides for construction of a new spillway, bridge, inlet and outlet channel at Reelfoot Lake, and closure of the existing spillway at Reelfoot Lake; construction of circulation channels; a sediment retention basin; Shelby Lake and associated waterfowl management areas; and a new water level management plan for Reelfoot Lake. The plan also provides opportunities to improve recreational and business opportunities and restores nationally significant resources.

During the deliberation, the Commission reviewed concerns about the effect of the project on adjacent landowners. However, the project will be operated in accordance with a water control plan based on report recommendations that will ensure local property rights will be protected.

The total estimated cost of the recommended plan is \$26,329,000. Of this amount, an estimated \$17,173,000 will be federally funded and \$9,156,000 will be provided by the non-federal sponsor, the State of Tennessee, acting through the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

The Commission, established in 1879, is responsible for navigation, flood control, and other water resources development on the Mississippi River. Its members consist of three officers from the Corps of Engineers (one who serves as president); one member from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and three civilians, two of whom are civil engineers. The MRC has statutory authority to operate on the Mississippi River from the headwaters to Head of Passes, pending authorization and funding of the projects by the Congress designating that the projects be implemented by the Commission. The Reelfoot Lake project will be part of the existing Mississippi River and Tributaries project.

Members of the Mississippi River Commission attending the public meeting were Maj. Gen. Phillip R. Anderson, MRC president and Commander of the Mississippi Valley Division; Mr. R.D. James of New Madrid, Mo.; Mr. Sam E. Angel of Lake Village, Ark.; Mr. William Clifford Smith of Houma, La.; and Rear Adm. Nicholas A. Prah, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Norfolk, Va.

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Subject to approval of this feasibility study by the Chief of Engineers and signing of a Planning Engineering and Design cost-sharing agreement, the Memphis District will begin design of the project this fiscal year.

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